

HB 2821 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Water

Prepared By: Allison Daniel, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 3/11

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Declares harmful algal blooms to be a threat to safe drinking water and public health and welfare. Directs OHA, in coordination with DEQ, to identify water sources susceptible to harmful algal blooms; develop a system for regular monitoring and testing of susceptible water sources; prioritize sources of domestic and municipal drinking water and bodies of water used for public recreation; and develop a protocol for issuing hazard advisory alerts to the public in the event of a harmful algal bloom.

Directs DEQ, in coordination with OHA, to develop and maintain a coordinated state agency strategy for harmful algal bloom monitoring and response; produce timely and high-quality data to allow OHA to determine level of risk to public health; maintain a publicly accessible clearinghouse of all data related to harmful algal blooms; identify sources of pollutants contributing to occurrences of harmful algal blooms; develop strategies for reducing said pollutants; and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies implemented for reducing pollutants. Directs DEQ to submit an updated quantitative and narrative report of the department's activities in addressing harmful algal blooms to the Governor and Legislative Assembly on or before September 15 of each even-numbered year.

No subsequent referral.

May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued.

May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Harmful algal blooms are caused by high concentrations of certain types of algae that can produce toxic compounds. These blooms can cause sickness and death in humans, pets, and livestock who come in contact with or drink the contaminated water. Blooms can also result in hypoxia, or low oxygen, in water bodies, which can kill fish and other wildlife. The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is the agency responsible for posting warnings and educating the public about harmful algal blooms. Once a body of water has been identified as having a harmful algal bloom, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is responsible for investigating the cause, identifying sources of pollution, and writing a pollution reduction plan.

House Bill 2821 would direct OHA and DEQ to coordinate in addressing harmful algal blooms, specifically by identifying, testing, and monitoring susceptible water sources; producing and maintaining a relevant, publicly-available database; developing a response strategy to determine and reduce sources of water pollutants; and creating a protocol for issuing advisory alerts.